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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5807
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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0636
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0961
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002750

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iran
- [1](#)3. Islamic Extremism

Key stories in the media:

All media reported on the Likud primaries. According to the

electronic media MK Gideon Saar came in first, followed by Gilad Erdan, Reuven Rivlin, Benny Begin, Moshe Kahlon, Silvan Shalom, Moshe Ya'alon, Yuval Steinitz, and Leah Ness. Early commentators saw a victory of conservatism in the party, particularly as Netanyahu's QstarsQ were relegated to rearward positions, the Qold guardQ to advanced places, and extremist Moshe Feiglin managed to win a secure spot on the Likud list.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte arrived in Israel yesterday for what was described as a Qstock-takingQ visit. One diplomatic official was quoted as saying that Negroponte is coming to Qtake the pulse of the relationship, as the Bush administration glides on and the new administration moves in.

HaQaretz's Natasha Mozgovaya recounted her visit to Guantanamo Naval Base, where Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the mastermind behind 9/11, and four others may face the death penalty.

The media reported that the government has unveiled a partial safety-net plan for retirees despite opposition by the treasury.

HaQaretz, Israel Hayom, and The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel has decided to delay the scheduled release of 230 Palestinian prisoners for a week, with each side accusing the other of causing the hold-up.

HaQaretz reported that army sources told the newspaper that, despite the recent escalation in the volume of rocket fire at southern Israel from Gaza, the IDF have been ordered to maintain a policy of restraint. As a result, the IDF is embarking on very few operations against the rocket-launching crews. HaQartz reported that Israel is again blocking foreign journalists from entering Gaza, despite protest y major news organizations. This morning Israel Rdio reported that Israel is allowing the passage of goods and fuel to Gaza.

HaQaretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday the European Union's 27 foreign ministers unanimously approved upgrading relations with Israel, despite vigorous efforts by the PA and Egypt to thwart the move.

The Jerusalem Post reported on the opening of a new checkpoint at Hawara near Nablus yesterday.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Tawfik Hamid, an expert and former member of Jamaa Islamiya told the daily yesterday that radical Islam will not be defeated unless it is confronted at the ideological level.

Maariv reported that Meretz Chairman Haim Oron has angered party veterans because of his alleged allocation of secure spots to newcomers.

Leading media reported that yesterday Rabbi and Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz was chosen as chairman of the new right-wing party, Habayit Hayehudi (The Jewish Home). The decision was made by the public council tasked with building the party's Knesset roster for the upcoming general elections. The council will begin the process of choosing the rest of the list on Tuesday.

HaQaretz reported that Israel's Ambassador to Germany Yoram Ben Ze'ev, told the daily last week that German exports to Iran are up 10 percent this year, and that the German authorities are "not doing enough" to keep Tehran isolated until it abandons its alleged efforts to develop nuclear arms.

Leading media reported that yesterday Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat added United Torah Judaism to his coalition, which until then had contained no ultra-Orthodox parties.

HaQaretz quoted Zohar Goshen, the Chairman of the Israeli Security Authority, as saying yesterday that the main problem with Israeli investors is that they have lost their faith in the U.S. banks. He added that Israel's financial system is the least exposed in the world to the vagaries of the global capital market and that Israel's first and primary task is to avoid loss of public trust in the financial system, as was witnessed in the U.S.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: QA bloody front in Gaza and the western Negev is no substitute for the diplomatic logic and political common sense the southern communities are seeking.

Ephraim Kleiman, Professor Emeritus of Economics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, wrote in HaQaretz: QThe idea that Qeconomic peaceQ can eliminate the need for a peace agreement and alleviating the travel restrictions imposed on the Palestinians comes from the naive assumption that economic improvement would mitigate hostility and decrease violence.

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: Q[Ehud Barak and Tzipi Livni] are both to blame for the fact that an American report that was issued last week and presented to Barack Obama recommends talking with Hamas. This is the first step towards American recognition of Hamas.

Block Quotes:

1. "The Election Campaign in Gaza"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (12/9): QThe upcoming [Israeli] elections serve as fertile ground for those who like to brandish slogans that drag Gaza and the lull into the political battle. Suddenly, everyone is in uniform, wearing helmets, arming themselves and prepared for war. It is enough to listen to the indirect exchanges between Tzipi Livni and Ehud Barak to understand that politics, not logic, is driving this talk. QWe must respond with fire to the rocket launches,Q declared Livni, aiming an arrow at Barak. QThe person responsible for security must act, and I will act in the diplomatic realm.Q Barak, for his part, vetoed the entry into Gaza of a Qatari aid ship, while his associates accused Livni of bending to pressure. On the sidelines of this quarrel, [Israeli cabinet ministers] talk about Qdestroying the infrastructureQ or launching a large-scale military operation, without offering a convincing explanation, or any explanation at all, as to how such an operation would effect change -- or, even more importantly, what its price would be in blood. Anyone seeking to rehabilitate the truce in Gaza must first obtain a truce on the political battlefield. A bloody front in Gaza and the western Negev is no substitute for the diplomatic logic and political common sense the southern communities are seeking.

II. "Can QEconomic PeaceQ Be the Solution?"

Ephraim Kleiman, Professor Emeritus of Economics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, wrote in HaQaretz (12/9): QThe idea that Qeconomic peaceQ can eliminate the need for a peace agreement and alleviating the travel restrictions imposed on the Palestinians comes from the naive assumption that economic improvement would mitigate hostility and decrease violence. From this point of view, Knesset Member Benjamin Netanyahu's current platform and Shimon Peres' past statements about a Qnew Middle EastQ have a lot in common. As far as the Palestinians are concerned, past experience completely refutes this assumption. The first Intifada, undoubtedly a popular uprising, erupted after about two decades of prosperity, the likes of which the Palestinian economy had never experienced.... As long as Israel upholds the restrictions, no employment centers will offer alternatives to work in Israel. Nor will they offer the 10-percent annual economic growth that Netanyahu sees in his vision, nor the economic peace he promises.

III. "The Father and Mother of Failure"

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/9): QEhud Barak has failed because the

continuation of fuel supplies to the workshops that produce Qassam rockets is under his responsibility.... Tzipi Livni has failed because most of the Western world still doesnQt understand HamasQs nature. She failed because many in the West do not understand that Hamas has an anti-Semitic manifesto with a Nazi scent.... Both ministers are guilty of fragility over the fact that HamasQs regime of horrors is ... winning increasing legitimacy. They are both to blame over the fact that an American report that was issued last week and presented to Barack Obama recommends talking with Hamas. This is the first step towards American recognition of Hamas.

12. Iran:

Summary:

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QIran assumes Russia and China will continue to protect it from embargoes. This leaves a gaping gulf between the Iranian and American approaches.

Block Quotes:

"Iran Sees Obama as Worthy Leader, But Is It Enough?"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (12/9): QIran faces presidential elections in six months, and economic woes will be the main campaign issue. Obama's hint of economic incentives is the QcarrotQ that he hopes will induce Tehran to change its policies. This is the heart of the American proposal, whose innovation is Obama's willingness to open direct talks. Iran, for its part, assumes the U.S. has no military option against it and that Israel would not attack without America's backing. Obama wants to shift the military focus from Iraq to Afghanistan, and Iran understands that he needs its cooperation with Iraq for this. Finally, Iran assumes Russia and China will continue to protect it from embargoes. This leaves a gaping gulf between the Iranian and American approaches.

13. Islamic Extremism:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QIt is important to distinguish Islam -- the religion and civilization -- from the threat posed by its extremist adherents.... Islam is mostly at war within itself.

Block Quotes:

"IslamQs War Within"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/9): QThis year, some 3 million faithful journeyed to Saudi Arabia, seeking forgiveness and spirituality as they proceeded through various stages of the hajj around Mecca.... It is important to distinguish Islam -- the religion and civilization -- from the threat posed by its extremist adherents, the Islamists, who are at war with the West and our values of liberty, tolerance and individual freedom. Without deluding ourselves about the extent to which the Islamists have penetrated the Muslim world, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge non-Islamist Muslim figures who seek a modus vivendi with the rest of us.... Islam is mostly at war within itself. And nowhere is this better illustrated than in Pakistan, where a moderate government is contending with a Taliban supported by Islamist elements within the regime's own intelligence agency. Closer to our neck of the woods, we see a similar scenario playing out between relative Fatah moderates and Hamas fundamentalists. Only Muslims can chart the direction in which they want to take their society. Some, like the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, seem to appreciate that a theology which celebrates brutality will ultimately consume its own.

